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CS 740 Morality At The End Of Modernity

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**MORALITY AT THE END OF MODERNITY
CS 740**

Spring 2000

Asbury Theological Seminary

TUESDAY & THURSDAY 2:25 - 3:40 pm Stanger Hall 404

James R. Thobaben, Ph.D.

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Office Hours: T, Th & F 9:00 – 10:00 am & by appointment

PURPOSE:

The course examines different perspectives on the meaning of “modern” and the implications for the culture by analyzing fictional portrayals of society, especially utopias and dystopias. The moral implications of various conceptualizations of freedom, free-will, personal identity, etc. are considered in light of changing technologies and forms of social organization. Special emphasis is placed on the implications for Christian social ethics by examining Christian and non-Christian authors.

Students will develop methods for understanding narratives as moral presentations in both fiction and “real life.” Students will examine how stories reinforce or challenge social views. Students will consider how stories impact the understanding of Christianity in the broader society and how Christians can tell the Gospel story in light of significant social change. The course will provide students with knowledge of literature commonly used among non-Christians as a means of framing moral conversation. The course will model another means for Christian ministries to present moral issues and ethical analysis in congregations.

OBJECTIVES:

- To introduce students to tools of cultural analysis;
- To introduce students to content analysis and related literature techniques of sociology;
- To help students consider how literature is an argument with unstated assumptions and intended moral conclusions;
- To familiarize students with literature used in secular discussions of secular social ethics (in particular in medical ethics, political ethics, & technology ethics);
- To introduce students to Christian responses to non-Christian understandings of social order;
- To help students develop ways of responding to non-Christian responses to social (especially technological and organizational) change;
- To provide students with a different way of teaching/preaching.

TEXTS:

See Schedule.

WRITTEN WORK:

- ALL: One hour examination on materials covered in class (Tuesday 5/16 9 am).
- OPTION 1: One 5 – 10 page work of fiction (or a ‘fictionalized’ incident) that portrays cultural and interpretive complexity of the late 20th century (DUE 3/15); **AND**, One 10 – 15 page social analysis of your earlier work of fiction. The fictional piece can be modified for the final analysis (DUE 4/12).
- OPTION 2: One 20 - 25 page paper on issue of social ethics covered in course (the paper should include research on topic and how it appears in literature) (DUE 4/12).

Analyses should use cultural, social, and theological tools (psychological, if appropriate).

EVALUATION:

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----|----------------------|
| Option 1: | 20% | Work of Fiction |
| | 50% | Analysis |
| Option 2: | 70% | Analysis |
| Examination: | 30% | |
| Class Participation: | | Deduction if lacking |
| Reading: | | Deduction if lacking |

All paper are to be typed with one inch margins (top, sides, bottom) using 12 point print.

There will be a penalty for late papers commensurate with the degree of lateness and the adequacy of the excuse.

All written work must use inclusive language when reference is made to human beings (male and female). This provides for both greater inclusion and greater precision. For more information on this topic see ‘Suggestions for Using Inclusive Language’, available in the Dean of Student’s Office. Exceptions may be made for the fictional piece if the theme warrants such.

Class participation will evaluated on the basis of attendance and participation in full class discussions.

Grade Range: Work for CS 740 will be evaluated at a graduate/professional school level.

- A = Unusually high quality, exceptional work*
- A- = Far above average, fine work*
- B+ = Above average for graduate work*
- B = Very good, but average for graduate work*
- B- = Slightly below average for graduate work*
- C+ = Meets requirements, but with noticeable inadequacies for graduate work*
- C = Meets requirements, but with gaps for graduate work*
- C- = Meets requirements, but with significant gaps for graduate work*
- D+ = Minimal work, acceptable*
- D = Minimal work, barely acceptable*
- D- = Acceptable, but only with great reservation*
- F = Failure; unacceptable work*

MORALITY AT THE END OF MODERNITY
Asbury Theological Seminary Spring Term 2000

<u>Week 1</u>	<i>Introduction & Basic Concepts in Ethics</i> The use of “story” as a moral tool in the Scripture and in literature Warner, Sylvia Townsend "The Phoenix" ALL
<u>Week 2</u>	<i>Pre-Modern Use of Literature in Times of Social Change</i> <u>Beowulf</u> ALL
<u>Week 3</u>	<i>Having An Ideal: Early Modern Images</i> More, Thomas <u>Utopia</u> (& scan <u>Hamlet</u>) PICK Bunyan, John <u>A Pilgrim's Progress</u> PICK
<u>Week 4</u>	<i>Enlightenment & Romanticism as Purity & Cynicism</i> Voltaire, <u>Candide</u> PICK Shelley, Mary <u>Frankenstein</u> PICK
<u>Week 5</u>	<i>The Modern Use of Untethered Power</i> Sinclair, Upton <u>The Jungle</u> PICK Orwell, George <u>Animal Farm</u> PICK
<u>Week 6</u>	<i>The Optimistic Moral Anthropology of Modernity</i> Orwell, George <u>Nineteen Eighty-four</u> PICK Golding, William <u>Lord of the Flies</u> PICK
<u>Week 7</u>	<i>The Modern Denial of Sin & the Reality of Evil</i> Stevenson, R.L. <u>Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</u> PICK Bradbury, Ray <u>Something Wicked This Way Comes</u> PICK Conrad, Joseph <u>The Heart of Darkness</u> PICK
<u>Week 8</u>	<i>Who Counts: Identity & “Usefulness”</i> Capek, Karel <u>R.U.R.</u> ALL Huxley, Aldous <u>Brave New World</u> ALL
<u>Week 9</u>	<i>(cont.)</i> Kafka, Franz “Metamorphosis” PICK Steinbeck, John <u>Of Mice & Men</u> PICK
<u>Week 10</u>	<i>Who Counts: Identity & Ethnicity</i> Baldwin, James <u>Go Tell It on the Mountain</u> ALL Speare, Elizabeth George <u>The Witch of Blackbird Pond</u> OPTIONAL
<u>Week 11</u>	<i>The Modern Avoidance of Death</i> MacDonald, George “Gifts of the Child Christ” PICK Tolstoy, Leo <u>The Death of Ivan Ilych</u> PICK
<u>Week 12</u>	<i>Challenges to Modernity</i> Abbott, Edwin A. <u>Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions</u> ALL Dostoyevski, Fyodor <u>Notes From Underground</u> PICK Lewis, C.S. <u>The Great Divorce</u> PICK
<u>Week 13</u>	<i>Is the Modern World Past (what is “post-modernity”)?</i> Miller, Walter <u>A Canticle for Leibowitz</u> ALL